Education Quality and Accountability Office

EQAO

Annual Report

2005–2006

With Learning in Mind

Message
from the Chair and the CEO

Church Street Junior Public School working with EQAO data: Principal Dr. Judy Gillis with teachers Jennifer McDonald and Yusuf Varachia.

EQAO is celebrating its 10th year of providing independent information to the province of Ontario—information that enhances student learning in publicly funded schools and supports our excellent educators in fostering the conditions for a successful life of learning and productive citizenship. This milestone provides us with an opportunity to both reflect on our first decade and look forward to nurturing our contributions to further student learning in Ontario.

EQAO is responsible for the province-wide assessment program in Ontario. It launched its first assessment to measure the reading, writing and mathematics skills of Grade 3 students and has expanded its program to four assessments at crucial points in a child's education. Assessments are conducted in reading, writing and mathematics in Grades 3 and 6, mathematics in Grade 9 and literacy skills through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in Grade 10.

As a result, educators and parents can now track improvements in these foundation skills across key stages in a student's educational journey.

During its 10 years, EQAO has continued to enhance its programs, adopt emerging best practices in large-scale assessment and incorporate input from educators, students, parents and the public. Our work is all about learning, and that includes our own efforts to learn from our practices and the feedback we receive from educators, parents and the public at large.

Our assessments are based on *The Ontario Curriculum*, which is in use in all publicly funded schools across the province. They are written, designed and field tested by Ontario teachers. Educators are involved in every step of the assessment process. With that in mind, parents and the public can be assured that EQAO assessments provide an appropriate and reliable measure of student learning in the province.

"Using the data provided by EQAO we examined our students' results to begin an informed professional discussion in our school community to support and enhance student achievement."
Jean Cory, Principal, West Carleton Secondary School

For every student, data and information provide the foundation for progress. This is the essence of assessment for learning: ongoing assessment to diagnose strengths and weaknesses, stretching all of our educational knowledge to deliver to children their entitlement—an education that supports the attainment of their fullest potential. Assessment for learning lies at the very heart of good teaching and learning. It helps teachers identify the next steps in their students' learning and engages students themselves in the process.

We continuously seek to improve all aspects of our testing program. EQAO solicits the professional input of a broad representation of teachers as well as internationally recognized measurement experts to achieve this end. The independent and extensive Ensuring Quality Assessments initiative, launched in 2002, affirmed many of EQAO's practices, and the review panel concluded that "EQAO has created world-class educational assessment programs."

Our commitment to students and their learning, to the excellent teachers and other educators who provide the key to ongoing improvement in student learning, and to parents and the public has not wavered since EQAO's inception in 1996. We resolve to maintain this commitment as we move forward.

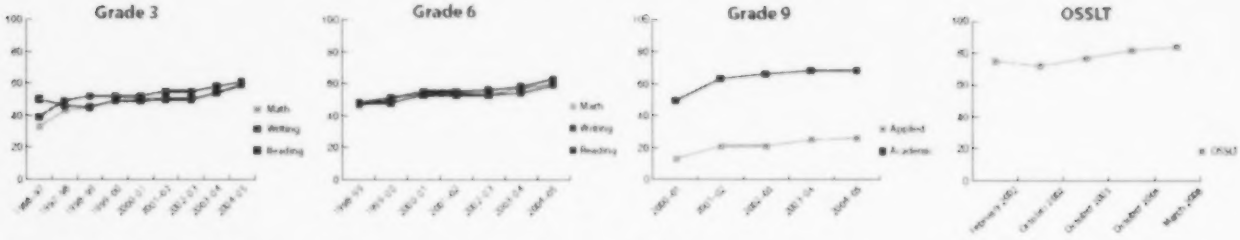
We are very proud of the leading-edge work of our excellent staff, and we all feel privileged to play such a key role in Ontario's education system. EQAO has provided quality information for the past 10 years that has served as a springboard for improving student learning. Together we will continue to work with our education partners ... with learning in mind.

Charles E. Pascal
Chair, Board of Directors

Marguerite Jackson
CEO

Trends
in Student Achievement

Assessment Achievement Rates



Grade 3 (Primary)

The first administration of the Grade 3 assessment was held in April 1997. In that first year, 39% of students achieved the provincial standard or above in writing. Since that time, approximately 1.2 million students have written the test, which measures the reading, writing and mathematics skills they are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 3. Students have continued to make gains in these critical foundation skills, and in 2004–2005, 61% of Grade 3 students achieved the provincial standard or above in writing.

Grade 6 (Junior)

The first administration of the Grade 6 assessment was held in May 1999. In that first year, 48% of students achieved the provincial standard or above in reading. In the administrations since, approximately 985 000 students have written the test, which measures what students have learned by the end of Grade 6. Student achievement has steadily improved at this next key stage of learning, and in 2004–2005, 63% of Grade 6 students achieved the provincial standard or above in reading.

Grade 9

The Grade 9 assessment was first held in 2000–2001 (administered in January and June). In that first year, 49% of students in the academic program achieved the provincial standard or above, as did 13% in the applied program. Since that time, approximately 741 000 students have written the test, which measures the mathematics skills they are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 9. Ontario students have continued a trend of improving student achievement, and in 2004–2005, 68% of Grade 9 students taking academic mathematics achieved the provincial standard or above, while 27% of Grade 9 students taking applied mathematics performed at the provincial standard or above.

OSSLT

The first full administration of the OSSLT was held in February 2002. In that first year, 75% of students successfully completed the literacy test. Since that time, approximately 705 000 students have written the literacy test, which measures the reading and writing skills they are expected to have learned by the end of Grade 9 across all subjects. Students must pass the literacy test or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course to obtain an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. There has been an increase in the success rates on the literacy test since 2002, and in 2005–2006, 84% of students writing the test for the first time were successful.

The annual OSSLT reflects the importance placed on reading and writing as foundation skills. Both the individual success of students and the long-term well-being of society depends on high literacy levels.

Student trustees attending EQAO's first symposium: Siân Rochefort, Nathan Lachowsky

Unless otherwise noted, results refer to students and schools in Ontario's English-language system. Results for Ontario's French-language system can be viewed in the French version of this report.

1996

June 27, 1996: **EQAO is established. Royal assent is given to Bill 30, which requires all students in publicly funded schools to participate in provincial assessments.**

1997

April 1997: **EQAO launches its first full assessment: 130 000 Grade 3 students in 3300 schools across the province write the test.**

May 1997: **Grade 6 mathematics assessment is administered to a sample of schools, with 9700 Grade 6 students at 200 schools writing the test.**

1998

May 1998: **EQAO launches its first secondary-school initiative, testing a province-wide sample of 5900 Grade 9 students in mathematics in 120 schools.**

Assessments
for Ontario Students

EQAO's Psychometric Expert Panel: Jeffrey Nellhaus, Deputy Commissioner of Education, Massachusetts Department of Education; Dr. Mark Reckase, Professor, Measurement and Quantitative Methods, Michigan State University; Dr. Don Klinger, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Queen's University; Dr. Barbara Plake, Retired Director, Oscar and Lucilla Buros Center for Testing, Professor Emeritus, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Dr. W. Todd Rogers, Professor, Centre for Research in Applied Measurement and Evaluation, University of Alberta; Dr. Dany Laveault, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa; Richard G. Wolfe, Associate Professor, Human Development and Applied Psychology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

Ensuring Quality Assessments

The comprehensive Ensuring Quality Assessments initiative, completed in November 2004, reviewed all aspects of EQAO's assessment programs. It affirmed many of EQAO's practices and provided insights for enhancements. In the past two years, EQAO has implemented the recommendations from the review, which include the following:

- Extended engagement of Ontario teachers in all stages of the assessment cycle through their participation in a variety of assessment-related committees in order to develop, review and select test questions and prepare scoring materials.
- Ready-to-use reports and school, board and item information reports, which provide information about how students responded on each test item and are available to schools and boards. This information can help focus efforts when devising strategies for improved student learning.
- Electronic collection of student demographic and assessment-related data online from schools.
- Assessment framework documents for educators, which detail technical aspects of the assessments and link the skills being measured on the assessment to curriculum expectations.

These enhancements ensure that EQAO's assessment designs continue to meet the highest international psychometric standards for large-scale testing while reducing the administrative workload for teachers, schools and school boards. The enhancements help to maintain Ontario's assessment program at a best-of-class level.

Supporting the Education Community

Ontario educators have strongly supported more opportunities to consult with EQAO. In September 2004, a School Support and Outreach Program was introduced by EQAO to increase the involvement of students, parents, teachers and school administrators.

EQAO engages education stakeholders in province-wide presentations, and there is ongoing communication with school principals. The agency provides opportunities for school principals and vice-principals to work with us to enhance their understanding of how to use EQAO data.

Celebrating School Success Stories

Each year, EQAO is privileged to share and celebrate successful learning strategies from schools and school boards across the province.

In 2004–2005, EQAO was pleased to showcase 36 success stories from schools that have launched strategies to support numeracy and literacy and to inspire students to become successful learners. Twelve schools were profiled for Grades 3 and 6 and six schools were heard from for Grade 9, while 18 schools writing the OSSLT shared their successful strategies. These schools represent diverse geographic, demographic and linguistic factors. Several key themes to address the literacy and numeracy needs of students emerged from the success stories:

- School-wide focus on literacy and/or numeracy
- Professional learning communities across schools
- Team responsibility for EQAO assessments
- Data-driven decision making and improvement planning
- Substantial professional development program for literacy and numeracy

EQAO data is most valuable in our board as a key data source to inform school improvement planning.
Mary Anne Alton,
Bluewater
District School Board

1999

May 1999: Ontario's province-wide testing program is expanded, and EQAO assesses all Grade 6 students in reading, writing and mathematics.

2000

October 2000: OSSLT trial is administered, with approximately 131 000 students at close to 800 schools writing the test.

2001

2001: The first full Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics is administered.

2002

February 2002: The first official administration of the OSSLT—a mandatory test that all secondary students in the province must pass to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma—takes place.

November 2002: The EQAO Board of Directors launches the extensive Ensuring Quality Assessments initiative to independently review its programs.

National and International
Assessments

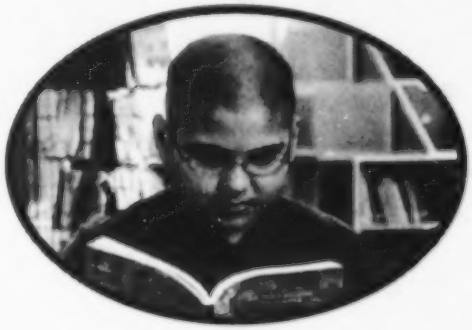
EQAO coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments on behalf of the Government of Ontario. These assessments provide information that helps focus education priorities in Ontario and across Canada and can give valuable insight into improvement planning. They show how Ontario students' learning compares to that of students across the country and around the world. The national and international assessments EQAO has coordinated include

- the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)
- the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)
- the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)
- the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), which now replaces the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP)
- the Second Information Technology in Education Study (SITES)

Ontario Grade 4 students performed near the top in overall reading achievement compared to 35 countries worldwide.

International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (2001): Ontario Report*, April 2003

Ontario teachers at EQAO test scoring site:
Back row: Tracy Brownlee, Lindsay Sirois, Christie-Ann Evans, Sherron Ritz. Front row: Aldo Barovier, Gail Lennon.



The development of a positive school environment and culture that embraces EQAO assessment as a learning opportunity for staff and students alike has been one of our most powerful strategies for success.

Ted Weltz, Principal, Sacred Heart Elementary School, Timmins

One of the most enlightening conversations I had was with an eight-year-old Grade 3 student who told me, "You could make schools better if you tell us what good work looks like and tell us what comes next." In these words, that student summed up what EQAO is all about.

Joan M. Green, EQAO's first CEO,
Provincial Report on Achievement, 1996–1997

2003: The Ensuring Quality Assessments review includes research, study, consultation, analysis, synthesis and implementation.

May 2004: Final report of Ensuring Quality Assessments review says "EQAO has created world-class educational assessment programs."

2004: Improvements to reporting are implemented. Schools and boards receive ready-to-use reports with helpful graphics to inform parents and educators about student performance.

2005: EQAO establishes a panel of internationally recognized measurement experts in large-scale assessment to validate and advise on psychometric procedures.

2003 2004 2005

Looking Forward

In just one decade, EQAO's assessment practices and processes have placed the agency at the forefront of large-scale assessment programs. Educators and the public have come to rely upon EQAO for important information about student learning. That's because EQAO provides data that deliver.

EQAO data allow parents and teachers to track student progress in the foundation skills of reading, writing and mathematics across key stages in the educational journey. The tests measure student learning according to curriculum expectations. In the past 10 years, EQAO data have documented a trend of improved student achievement across all subjects and in all grades tested.

But a successful organization never rests on its laurels.

Looking to the future, EQAO is committed to helping every parent and classroom teacher understand how to use results from province-wide tests. The goal is that this data will spark new learning strategies, encourage innovative instructional techniques and shape educational policy so students can attain their fullest potential in a successful future.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, EQAO is planning further enhancements to its tests. Beginning in the 2006–2007 school year, the Grade 3 assessment will be called the "Primary Division" assessment and the Grade 6 assessment will be referred to as the "Junior Division" assessment. This will better reflect the fact that EQAO tests measure the cumulative knowledge and skills students have acquired by the end of Grade 3 and to the end of Grade 6. The new assessment designations also reinforce the fact that literacy and numeracy are cross-curricular and school-wide endeavours—not just the responsibility of Grades 3 and 6 teachers.

EQAO is proud to celebrate a decade of supporting student learning and looks forward to building on our past to enhance our students' future.

EQAO's Board of Directors, 2005–2006

Dr. Charles E. Pascal
Chair

Jerry Ponkivar
Vice-Chair

Marguerite Jackson
CEO

Evelyn Bradley

Mariette Carrier-Fraser

Dr. Brian L. Desbiens

Dr. Lorna Earl

Anita Kesavan Srinivasan

Marilyn Knox

Dr. Bette M. Stephenson

Values

EQAO values student learning above all other interests.

EQAO values information that has the potential to bring about constructive change and improvement.

EQAO values the dedication and expertise of Ontario's educators and works in partnership with them in all of its activities.

EQAO values the delivery of its programs and services with equivalent quality in both English and French.

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Web site: www.eqao.com

About EQAO

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is a catalyst for increasing the success of Ontario students by measuring their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics against a common curriculum benchmark. As an independent provincial agency, EQAO plays a pivotal role by conducting province-wide tests at key points in every student's primary, junior and secondary education and reporting the results. The objective and reliable facts obtained add to the current knowledge about student learning and are an important tool for improvement at the individual, school and provincial levels.

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Auditor's Report
Year Ended March 31, 2006

To the Board of Directors of Education Quality and Accountability Office ("The Agency")

We have audited the statement of financial position of Education Quality and Accountability Office as at March 31, 2006 and the statement of revenues and expenditures and accumulated surplus for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Agency's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform an audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

In our opinion, these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Agency as at March 31, 2006 and the results of its operations for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles for public sector entities.

Howarth Associates LLP

Toronto, Ontario
May 17, 2006

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Notes to Financial Statements
Year Ended March 31, 2006

1. DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS

The Education Quality and Accountability Office ("The Agency") was established by the Province of Ontario by the "EQAO Act", June 1996. The Agency was created to assure greater accountability and to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of education in Ontario. This is done through assessments and reviews based on objective, reliable and relevant information, and the timely public release of that information along with recommendations for system improvement.

2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These financial statements, which have been prepared in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles, reflect the accounting policies set out below.

Revenue recognition

a) Base allocation payments from the Ministry of Education are recognized when received.

b) Other revenue is recognized at the time the service is rendered.

Capital assets

Capital assets are stated at cost less accumulated amortization. Capital assets are amortized over their estimated useful lives at the following rates and methods:

Computer equipment	3 years	straight-line method
Furniture and fixtures	5 years	straight-line method

For assets acquired or brought into use during the year, amortization is calculated from the month following that in which additions come into operation.

Measurement uncertainty

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amount of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the period. Such estimates include providing for amortization of capital assets. Actual results could differ from these estimates. These estimates are reviewed periodically, and, as adjustments become necessary they are reported in earnings in the period in which they become known.

3. EXPENSES

There has been a decrease in expenses compared to the previous year as a result of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) scoring being changed from fall 2005 to the next fiscal period (spring 2006).

4. BOARD RESTRICTED FUND

A Board Restricted Fund was established by a Board of Directors' resolution for the purpose of examining assessment processes and researching emerging methodologies in large scale assessment in order to maintain Ontario's high quality assessment programs as best of class. The fund is currently invested in a Royal Bank of Canada current account. The Agency has the authority to retain any revenue that is not provincial funding according to the *EQAO Act*, the Agency Establishment and Accountability Directive and the *Financial Administration Act*.

5. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Cost	Accumulated amortization	**2006 Net book value**	2005 Net book value
Computer equipment	$ 769,092	$ 159,962	**$ 609,130**	$ 298,564
Furniture and fixtures	178,752	83,254	**95,498**	101,830
	$ 947,844	$ 243,216	**$ 704,628**	$ 368,394

6. LEASE COMMITMENTS

The Agency leases premises under a long-term lease that expires on December 31, 2012. Under the terms of the lease, the Agency is required to pay an annual base rent which is pre-determined based on square footage rates plus operating and maintenance charges.

The minimum annual lease payments related to the office lease and office equipment for the next five years are as follows:

2007	$ 1,113,500
2008	1,090,500
2009	1,067,000
2010	1,096,500
2011	1,107,000
	$ 5,464,500

7. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The Agency's financial instruments consist of cash, board restricted fund, accounts receivable and accounts payable and accrued liabilities. Unless otherwise noted, it is management's opinion that the Agency is not exposed to significant interest, currency or credit risks arising from these financial instruments. The fair value of these financial instruments approximate their carrying values, due to their short-term maturity.

8. STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

A statement of cash flows has not been presented, as the information it would contain is readily apparent from the financial statements provided.

Financial Report
Year Ended March 31, 2006

Statement of Financial Position
March 31, 2006

	2006	2005
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	$ 8,766,863	$ 6,215,330
Board restricted fund (*Note 4*)	1,930,000	–
Accounts receivable	1,277,216	351,047
	11,974,079	6,566,377
CAPITAL ASSETS (*Note 5*)	704,628	368,394
	$ 12,678,707	$ 6,934,771
LIABILITIES AND ACCUMULATED SURPLUS		
CURRENT		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	$ 3,430,808	$ 5,143,202
Operating fund	7,317,899	1,791,569
Board restricted fund	1,930,000	–
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS	9,247,899	1,791,569
	$ 12,678,707	$ 6,934,771

Statement of Revenues and Expenditures and Accumulated Surplus
Year Ended March 31, 2006

	2006	2005
REVENUE		
Ministry of Education Base allocation payments	$ 33,525,809	$ 30,802,870
Other revenue	528,539	676,104
	34,054,348	31,478,974
EXPENSES (*Note 3*)		
Service and rental	15,101,017	24,326,654
Salaries and wages	9,344,306	8,576,052
Transportation and communication	1,566,778	2,408,452
Supplies and equipment	585,837	414,204
	26,598,018	35,725,362
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES (EXPENDITURES OVER REVENUES)	7,456,330	(4,246,388)
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS–BEGINNING OF YEAR	1,791,569	6,037,957
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS–END OF YEAR	$ 9,247,899	$ 1,791,569